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ABSTRACT

This study, a research component of Tennessee's 1987-1988 Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) project, describes actual and preferred teacher involvement in selected school activities. Two hundred and three teachers in 18 schools ranked their degree of actual and preferred involvement in determining school activities. The research indicated that teachers want to be involved in activities that relate to their primary function, teaching. It suggests that principals should assess teacher learning activity preferences and gear school learning experiences toward them. (JAM)

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TEACHER INVOLVEMENT: A MESSAGE FOR "RESTRUCTURERS"

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INVOLVEMENT IN WHAT? TEACHER ACTUAL AND PREFERRED INVOLVEMENT IN SELECTED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES*

Introduction

There is considerable national interest in changing the way schools are run (Carnegie Forum; Holmes Group). Some groups favor restructuring the schools and/or "empowering" teachers (Pipho, 1988). As recently as 1984, Imber and Duke stated, "There is no strong empirical confirmation for theoretical claims that high levels of teacher participation in school decision making would improve schools" (p. 24). On the one hand, Johnson and Germinario (1985) found that teachers were most loyal to administrators who afforded them decision-making power in areas closely related to instruction. On the other hand, in studying principal influence in instructionally effective schools, High and Achilles (1986) found that high levels of faculty involvement and participation characterized the influence-gaining styles of principals of less effective schools and that lower levels of involvement characterized the influence-gaining styles of principals of highly effective schools (as measured by pupil test scores) (High, 1984). The question may be less one of involvement than of involvement in what. Thus, it may be important to study carefully the types of involvements, not just the amounts of involvement, for at least two reasons: 1) to help understand principal roles in school improvement and 2) to help school administrators avoid the divisiveness caused by unilateral decisions (that may have helped foster teacher unionism in the past).

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The present study is descriptive. The population was all schools (n=21) participating in Tennessee's Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) project in 1987-88. As part of the LEAD evaluation, the external evaluator developed a matrix to obtain information from teachers about their involvement in school activities. One axis of the 2x2 matrix deals with actual involvement (I am involved; I am not involved); the other axis deals with ideals or preferences (I want to be involved; I do not want to be involved). (See Figure 1.) Teacher respondents (n=203) from 18 of the 21 schools listed their responses in each quadrant in rank order of importance. There were over 2500 separate responses.

		IDEAL INVOLVEMENT (PREFERENCE)	
		I want to be involved (Yes)	I don't want to be involved (No)
ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT	(Yes) I am involved	1. 2. etc.	Rank order (1=Most Important) your choices in the appropriate quadrants
	(No) I am not involved	1. 2. etc.	

Figure 1. Involvement Matrix (Complete Instrument in Appendix A)

Researchers modified the Imber and Duke (1984:29) "Typology of School Decision" by adding the category, "Extra-curricular Activities." After achieving inter-rater and intra-rater agreements exceeding .80 on a sample of responses, raters assigned responses (n=2518) from the quadrants to the eight-category typology (Curriculum/Instruction; Personnel; Priorities/Goals; Student Conduct; Scheduling; Extra-School Relationships; Facilities; Extra-Curricular Activities). Table 1 presents the categories for organizing the responses.

A Pilot Test

A pilot test was conducted using full-time summer-school students (n=41) in an Ed.S. program in a South Carolina higher education institution. These students were teachers preparing for administration. Results of this pilot test were used to make slight changes in the final instrument. Nevertheless, the pilot responses are in Table 2, as a point of comparison for the major study results which are shown in Table 3. The slightly higher percent (66) of "want to be involved" category for the advanced graduate students may reflect their aspirations to be administrators (58 percent for the larger sample).

The Major Study

Using total responses (n=2518) in the major study: 40% showed that teachers wanted to be involved and were (35% of these were in the category "Curriculum and Instruction"); 18% wanted to be involved and were not: 25% were involved but preferred not to be (30% of these were in the category "Personnel" and 29% in "Student Discipline"); 17% were not involved and did not want to be. Responses in quadrants 1 and 4 offer harmony between actual and preferred (57%); responses in quadrants 2 and 3 indicate dissonance between actual and preferred (43%). The contents of these quadrants--both individual responses and responses grouped into the eight categories--provide directions for principal decisions about teacher involvements in schools.

The 203 respondents provided many examples, but they also left 214 quadrants totally empty or devoid of any response: 1% of the empty quadrants were in the "want to be and am involved" (respondents here provided what it is they are involved in and want to be involved in--most every respondent provided examples here); 43% were in the "want to be but am not involved" category; 25% in "am involved but don't want to be" and 31% of the empty quadrants were in the "don't want to be and am not involved" category.

Table 4 shows the distribution of all responses (n=2518) into the eight categories of the organizing typology. Note that teachers are more interested in curriculum than are aspiring administrators (22% to 13%), but the reverse is true of personnel (18% to 34%).

Analysis is continuing on the rank orders and on the relative distribution of responses across the eight-category typology (Imber and Duke, 1988) for each quadrant and also for total response.

Even preliminary analyses show that fully 25% of the 2518 responses fall into the classification, "prefer not to be involved, but am." This suggests over-involvement, and specifically shows over-involvement with issues of personnel (evaluation), student conduct and extra-curricular activities.

Assuredly there is some discrepancy between what teachers want (prefer) to be involved in and what they actually are involved in. They clearly do not care for involvement in "mechanical" things such as scheduling, and they desire to avoid the problem areas of "Personnel" and "Student Conduct." They are most involved in--and would most prefer to be involved in--Curriculum and Instruction efforts. This seems reasonable for the teacher as a professional with major responsibilities in teaching some content.

The "effective schools" literature urges the principal to be the instructional leader and to de-emphasize the management functions in the school. Teachers seem most interested in being involved in the curriculum and instruction concerns (professionalism?), efforts more closely aligned with "instructional leadership." They are least interested in the routine (scheduling) or the disruptive (student conduct) elements, efforts usually seen as management. This finding presents an interesting dilemma for the principal trying to be the "instructional leader." Results of this exploratory study suggest that the principal needs to study teacher preference/actual involvement and develop an

administrative style that will both complement teacher interests and lead to the achievement of school goals. Without some accommodation of this type, restructuring of schools will continue to be a fractious undertaking.

Ideas From Some Other Involvement Studies

Restructuring public schools is in. Reports from the Carnegie Forum and Holmes Group contain suggestions that public schools are indeed in need of restructuring. The reports point to the deficiencies currently apparent in public schools in terms of student achievement, high numbers of drop-outs, and a general lack of high teacher morale in the teaching profession. Empowering teachers, one approach to school restructuring supported by numerous researchers and groups, is receiving increased national attention. Advocates of the "empowering teacher movement" contend that, for too long, decisions have been made at the top of the organizational structure; that is, superintendents, boards of education, supervisors and principals have for too long made most or all decisions which impact the school as work place. In the face of the call for restructuring, note that Ross (1980, p. 226) declared that involving subordinates in the decision-making process actually increased the control of subordinates. He stated:

> There is a substantial tradition within organizational theory which argues that providing subordinates with an opportunity to participate in organizations' decision-making will increase the control exercised by subordinates in the organization.

Thus, the conventional wisdom that allowing subordinates more involvement in decisions as these decisions affect more directly their working conditions and/or work place will in reality increase the power, if you will, of the subordinate. Berman and McLaughlin (1979) noted that the most effective principals often disbursed decision-making power by delegating authority, but did so within a central framework agreed upon by the principal. Effective principals encourage early staff decision-making involvement and "actively seek staff

advice on important school-wide issues" (McGeown, 1979, p. 80). Ross (1980, p. 227) concluded that involving teachers in the decision-making process encouraged behavioral changes among teachers that the principal wanted to have occur. He stated:

> By providing for greater teacher influence in the settlement of school-wide curriculum decisions, the principal can gain access to in-class decisions and thereby encourage the behavioral changes he/she deems appropriate.

Keedy () found that principals in effective schools set and used the norm of reciprocity. By involving teachers in key building decisions, they principal could expect to have influence in teacher classroom work.

Other studies have also pointed out the importance of staff participation and leadership in decision-making. In a study of teacher and student perception of school climate, Ellett and Walberg (1979) found a relationship between staff participation and student achievement. Group decision-making was related to achievement in the Rutter, et al. study (1979) and to coherence in Wynn's (1980) observational research in the schools. Similarly, the Phi Delta Kappa study (1980) discovered a consistent pattern of staff involvement in decision-making in high-achieving elementary schools, along with high consideration given teachers by the administration. Kasten (1986, p. 279) suggested several ways that teachers might be involved in school-level governance: selection of new teachers and formation of work groups; supervision and evaluation of novices by peers; formulation of school goals; development of school programs; development and coordination of curriculum; review of student routines and discipline policy; design of inservice education; scheduling of students and classes; and organization of school improvement programs. By involving teachers in these ways, authority and responsibility would be diffused throughout the educational organization. This, in turn, will allow them involvement in many facets of

education other than just in the classroom where they have had remarkable--nearly unassailable--autonomy in the past.

> Currently, American education is plagued with high staff turnover, chronic absenteeism, discipline problems, lack of commitment, declining pupil competence, permissiveness, teacher burn-out, low self-esteem, sense of helplessness, frustration, and disappointment. Despite these ills, administrators deplete the energies and effectiveness of their human resources by continuing to issue top-down orders (Chapey, 1983, p. 394).

Owens (1981) identified three rules of thumb for identifying decisions in which teachers should participate: (1) the test of relevance; (2) the test of expertise; (3) the test of jurisdiction. Barnard (1938) noted that teachers' involvement depends on their zone of indifference, their zone of sensitivity, and their zone of ambivalence. Johnston and Germinarro (1985) examined the relationship between teacher involvement in decision-making and loyalty to their principals in ten elementary and five secondary schools in New Jersey. Researchers found that the teachers were most loyal to principals who saved them decision-making power in areas closely related to instruction. Devlin (1980) reported the 1977 study of 315 teachers which suggests that when teachers perceive that the subject matter under consideration is important to them, participatory decision-making is significantly related to favorable job attitudes. Sorenson (1985), reporting a study of 240 superintendents from the western part of the United States, revealed that participatory modes were used more when timeframes were longer and when districts were larger. Only in rare cases do superintendents feel called upon to include others in decision-making formally, and even more rarely do they act with only minimal advice. The great majority of decisions, under all types of time constraints, tend to be made after a significant amount of input has been sought through informal means. Martin and Saif (1984) reported a case study through which they determined that the key to successful curriculum reform is a broad-based, systematic decision-making

process directed by teachers. Common approaches to curriculum development are haphazard and tend to produce superficial change. An approach that gives teachers a personal and professional stake in its results, however, can generate fundamental and lasting reforms. Past researchers have claimed that it is possible to over-involve individuals in decision-making and that this saturation may result in a decrease in job satisfaction.

Thierbach (1985) presented a synthesis of three studies that covered the kindergarten through 12th grade spectrum and tested the curvilinear relationship between teacher involvement in decision-making and job satisfaction. She found that a significant relationship existed between respondents' decision condition and their levels of job satisfaction. Results also indicate that the point of saturation has not been reached. It follows then that administrators have considerable latitude in which to increase teacher involvement in decision-making before diminishing job satisfaction. Robinson (1976) reported a study of 30 principals and 675 teachers from elementary and secondary schools in a large suburban school district in Vancouver, British Columbia. The data revealed that preferred levels of teacher participation in decision-making are greater than actual levels of decision-making. Teachers desire for participation in school decision-making varies with the decision area. The author suggested that more collegial decision-making systems in schools would produce greater teacher satisfaction and organizational productivity.

High and Achilles (1986) reported a study of 19 schools from a large mid-western school district which were involved in a school effectiveness improvement project. Some schools were designated "effective" schools (their student test scores were improving); some were designated "other" schools because their students' test scores were declining or remaining stagnant. The study was based upon the work of French and Raven and the five bases of social

power to which the researchers added two additional bases of power. Theoretically, principals have seven bases of power at their disposal to employ to gain influence with teachers and thereby provide leadership for their schools. These bases of power were: referant, expert, reward/enable, coercer and legitimate authority (French and Raven) and principal as norm-setter and involver. The principal who uses teacher involvement as a source of power involves teachers in school-wide decision-making and can expect, through reciprocity, to be involved in individual classroom decision-making where teachers have historically reigned supreme. The data revealed that principals in effective schools actually used involvement to gain influence with their teachers to a relatively small degree. According to teachers in effective schools, their principal used four other sources of influence before engaging in involvement behavior. Teachers in other schools reported that their principal used involvement behavior more frequently than did teachers in the effective schools. Teachers in both groups of schools were asked to rank the potential influence of the seven influence-gaining behaviors on them to acquiesce to the wishes of the principal. Both the teachers in high-achieving schools and teachers in the other schools ranked involvement behavior as the sixth most potentially influential behavior out of seven influence-gaining behaviors. Obviously, both groups of teachers indicated that the use of involvement behavior by their principals had little influence on their decisions to do what the principal wished them to do. Perhaps principals in general have been reading too much of the 1960's "togetherness" literature and believing it. Teachers may be very busy teaching and therefore willing for principals to provide leadership and make decisions, thus freeing the teachers to have the time to work with their children.

Conclusion

Conventional wisdom tells us that empowering teachers with opportunities for involvement in school-related matters has the potential to improve their

esprit de corps, increase their respect and liking for the principal, increase their job satisfaction, and generate fundamental and lasting reforms. Some researchers have suggested that teacher empowerment results in greater organizational productivity and improved learning for students. Other researchers, reporting data gathered in numerous studies, have concluded that there seems to be no clear, overwhelming evidence that teacher empowerment makes a difference in the school. Perhaps, as Ember and Duke (1984) have suggested, the inconsistency found in the reports of various empirical investigations is due in large part to the lack of a common theoretical framework to guide the research projects.

The debate surrounding teacher empowerment/involvement has been joined. Preliminary results seem to suggest that teachers do want to be involved, but want to be involved in areas that seem most closely related to their main function, teaching. It seems appropriate to suggest to principals that they can determine the kinds of things teachers want to be involved in and, if they are willing to exert the effort to uncover these desires, can appropriately and meaningfully involve teachers in the school's business, teaching children.

TABLE 1

A Typology of School Decisions

Category	Sub-categories*
1. Curriculum and Instruction	Course Content, Material Selection, Articulation, Student Evaluation
2. Personnel	Hiring, Firing, Staff Evaluation, Teaching Assignments
3. Priorities and Goals	Needs Assessment, School Improvement, Discretionary Spending
4. Student Conduct	Rules, Discipline
5. Scheduling	Calendar, Course Offerings, Placement
6. Extra-School Relationships	Public Relations, Union-Related, Central-Office Related
7. Facilities	Building Modification, Maintenance
8. Extra-Curricular Activities**	

*Note: Sub-category list contains imported examples, but is not exhaustive. Budgetary decisions are included in each category.

**Category added for this study.

Imber, M. and Duke, D.L. (1984, Winter). "Teacher Participation in School Decision Making: A Framework For Research." Journal of Educational Administration, XXII, 1, p. 29.

TABLE 2

Advanced Graduate Student (n=41) Responses (n=482) to
Involvement Matrix (S.C., 6/87)
(Percents may not equal 100 due to rounding)

	Responses (n)	Percents of Category	Percents of Total
I. I WANT TO BE INVOLVED (n=316) (66%)			
A. I am involved and want to be: (n=192) (40%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	40	21	8
2. Personnel	76	36	16
3. Priorities and Goals	30	16	6
4. Student Conduct	4	2	1
5. Scheduling	9	5	2
6. Extra-School Relationships	17	9	4
7. Facilities	4	2	1
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	12	6	2
B. I am not involved, but want to be: (n=124) (26%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	14	11	3
2. Personnel	38	31	8
3. Priorities and Goals	32	26	7
4. Student Conduct	1	-	0
5. Scheduling	10	8	2
6. Extra-School Relationships	3	1	0
7. Facilities	12	10	2
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	14	11	3
II. I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED (n=166) (34%)			
A. I am involved, but don't want to be: (n=118) (24%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	3	3	0
2. Personnel	35	30	7
3. Priorities and Goals	9	8	2
4. Student Conduct	18	15	4
5. Scheduling	20	17	4
6. Extra-School Relationships	4	3	1
7. Facilities	15	13	3
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	14	12	3
B. I am not involved, and don't want to be: (n=48) (10%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	4	8	1
2. Personnel	17	35	4
3. Priorities and Goals	7	15	1
4. Student Conduct	2	4	0
5. Scheduling	4	8	1
6. Extra-School Relationships	6	12	1
7. Facilities	1	2	0
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	7	15	1

IA & IIB = 240 (50%); IB & IIA = 242 (50%)

TABLE 3

Teacher (n=203) Responses (n=2518) to Involvement Matrix (TN-LEAD, 1987-88)
(Percents may not equal 100 due to rounding)

	Responses (n)	Percents of Category	Percents of Total
I. I WANT TO BE INVOLVED (n=1458) (58%)			
A. I am involved and want to be: (n=999) (40%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	353	35	14
2. Personnel	111	11	4
3. Priorities and Goals	32	23	1
4. Student Conduct	44	4	2
5. Scheduling	41	4	2
6. Extra-School Relationships	91	9	4
7. Facilities	5	0.5	0.2
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	322	32	13
B. I am not involved, but want to be: (n=459) (18%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	94	21	4
2. Personnel	59	13	2
3. Priorities and Goals	42	9	2
4. Student Conduct	31	7	1
5. Scheduling	104	23	4
6. Extra-School Relationships	20	4	0.8
7. Facilities	11	2	0.4
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	98	21	4
II. I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED (n=1060) (42%)			
A. I am involved, but don't want to be: (n=626) (25%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	73	12	3
2. Personnel	196	31	8
3. Priorities and Goals	27	4	1
4. Student Conduct	186	30	7
5. Scheduling	31	5	1
6. Extra-School Relationships	25	4	1
7. Facilities	6	1	0.2
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	82	13	3
B. I am not involved, and don't want to be: (n=434) (17%)			
1. Curriculum and Instruction	31	7	1
2. Personnel	77	18	3
3. Priorities and Goals	28	7	1
4. Student Conduct	94	22	4
5. Scheduling	22	5	0.9
6. Extra-School Relationships	14	3	0.6
7. Facilities	6	1	0.2
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	162	37	6

IA + IIB = 1433 (57%); IIA + IB = 1085 (43%)

TABLE 4

All Responses (2518) and (482) Classified to Eight Categories of the Typology

Category	All Responses Of 2518		All Responses Of 482	
	n	%	n	%
1. Curriculum and Instruction	551	22	61	13
2. Personnel	443	18	166	34
3. Priorities and Goals	129	5	78	16
4. Student Conduct	355	14	25	5
5. Scheduling	198	8	43	9
6. Extra-School Relationships	150	6	30	6
7. Facilities	28	1	32	7
8. Extra-Curricular Activities	664	26	47	10
TOTAL	2518	100%	482	99%

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INVOLVEMENT

High (1984) found that principals of high-achieving schools used a variety of influence-gaining behaviors; the most important was principal as "expert." These same principals used other influence-gaining behaviors less, and one was "involvement." High also found that principals in schools where pupils did not achieve as well used "involvement" a great deal. The logical extension of this is that principals should involve their teachers less.

Other literature and common sense both suggest that involvement is important. People need to be involved to feel a sense of ownership and commitment.

These two somewhat differing positions are certainly not irreconcilable. Probably some types of involvement are seen more as a bother and as not really important. To try to identify what involvement might be important and to compare that with involvement that may be less important, we are soliciting your help.

The enclosed instrument is open-ended so that you can write down the things that are important to you. We shall classify the information and then analyze it. Comments of any individual will not be identified; data will be aggregated and analyzed by groups.

Involvement, as we are dealing with it, can be divided into four parts. First, there is preference: to be involved or not to be involved. Second, there is actual involvement: you are involved, or you are not. These four dimensions are shown in a grid on the next page.

We would like you to enter, in each quadrant, those five or six things which fit each quadrant's descriptors. Please make the entries in the rank order of the importance of these activities to you. That is, in quadrant #1 or the upper left quadrant, please list, in order of importance, those five or six things regarding your professional school or educational activities that you are involved in and that you like to be involved in. This is the best of all possible worlds. You are involved and believe that this involvement is important; it is something you really should be involved in.

Quadrant 2 (lower left) might represent the worst of all possible worlds for you. Please list those things which you are involved in, but which you wish you were not.

Quadrant 3 (upper right) could also represent the worst of all possible worlds. Please list those things in which you are not involved, but in which you really would like to be involved.

Quadrant 4 (bottom right) probably represents a relatively comfortable feeling. Please list those things which you are not involved in, and which you don't really want to be involved in anyway.

We thank you in advance for your cooperation. This information will help us identify the kinds of things that school personnel feel are important uses of their time, and help us inform school leaders about the perceived value of involvement.

PLEASE TURN PAGE AND COMPLETE THE GRID.

R.M. High (1984), "Influence-Gaining Behaviors of Principals in Schools of Varying Levels of Instructional Effectiveness." Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN. DAI, 45, 3040A.

1. PLEASE READ THE COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONS ON PREVIOUS PAGE.

2. PLEASE MAKE ENTRIES IN RANK ORDER ON EACH QUADRANT.

MY PREFERENCE

	I WANT TO BE INVOLVED	I DON'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED
	Rank Order	Rank Order
	I am involved and want to be:	I am involved, but don't want to be:
I AM INVOLVED	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.
MY ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT	1 3 / 2 4	
	Rank Order	Rank Order
	I am not involved, but want to be:	I am not involved, and don't want to be:
I AM NOT INVOLVED	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.
	6.	6.

School Level
1. Elem. _____
2. JHS/Mid. _____
3. HS _____
4. Other _____

Your Position
1. Teacher _____
2. Student _____
3. Parent _____
4. Custodian _____
5. Administrator _____
6. Other (specify) _____